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Atari Online News, Etc.  
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~ More Hotmail Security! ~ Another Acer 3D Laptop! ~ Google Opens Goo.gl!  
~ No 3DS for Christmas! ~ Huge Zeus Trojan Bust! ~ Ties With Oracle Cut!

-\* 'Jihadi Sites' Aren't Stopped \*-  
-\* Cyber-Blitz Response Plan Testing! \*-  
-\* U.S. Cyber Command Slips Behind Schedule! \*-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"  
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Here we are, the first of October, and we're taking a pounding with high winds and bursts of torrential downpours as a result of the remnants of yet another hurricane making its way past us up the east coast. The sounds of acorns and small tree branches hitting the house has been constant for more than a day now! It's been an interesting past couple of days!

October 1st! Wow, yet again I'm wondering where this year has gone! Nothing much has changed other than the year on the calendar! We're all another year older, along with the effects that go along with adding to our age! Another period of political wrangling; like many of you, you're probably seeing typical BS campaigning in your state like we are here in Massachusetts. This time around we have the added attraction of some "Tea Party" candidates to keep things interesting. Obama's presidential slogan for change may come back and haunt him - especially in a couple of years!

It's been another long week! Pretty soon, like in a week or so, I'll stop working at the golf course and return to my "regular" schedule at the grocery store. Another sign of the seasons... Not looking forward to that regular routine again; it's been tough on me physically, but bills need to be paid and food put on the table! Not too many of us have the luxury of taking our pick of jobs these days, if we're even lucky enough to find one! So, let me get the dogs out one last time for the evening before the skies open up again, and then put this week's issue to be for another week!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING  
compiled by Joe Mirando  
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[Editor's note: Due to being out of sorts due to more respiratory ailments,

there will not be a P.A.T. column this week.]

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News      -   The Latest Gaming News!
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# Nintendo Cuts Profit, 3DS Not Ready for Christmas

Nintendo slashed its earnings forecast by more than half Wednesday after announcing that its 3DS game machine, packed with glasses-free 3-D technology, won't be ready to go on sale for Christmas.

Nintendo now expects 90 billion yen (\$1 billion) in profit for the year through March 2011, down from an initial projection of 200 billion yen (\$2.4 billion) profit.

The 3DS will go on sale in February in Japan, and March in Europe and the U.S., missing the year-end shopping season which is a critical time for all game-makers to rake in profits.

Kyoto-based Nintendo Co. had promised the 3DS for sometime before April next year, and so the announcement is not technically a delay. But its forecasts had assumed the machine would on be on sale sooner.

Nintendo said the strong yen, which reduces profits from overseas sales when brought back to Japan, and the timing of the 3DS launch were behind its decision to lower projections for the fiscal year.

For the year through March 2011, Nintendo expects to sell 23.5 million DS machines, including 4 million 3DS, down from its earlier forecast for 30 million. It sold 27 million DS machines the previous fiscal year.

The latest revision shows that even Nintendo, which has stood up fairly well among Japanese exporters in hard times, is getting battered by the surging yen. Nintendo had counted dollar trading near 85 yen. The dollar has recently dived below 85 yen.

Nintendo President Satoru Iwata said 3DS will cost 25,000 yen (\$300) in Japan, where it will hit stores Feb. 26. Overseas prices and specific dates will be announced later.

Hirokazu Hamamura, president of Enterbrain Inc., a major Tokyo game-industry publisher, said he was surprised by the release date because of widespread rumors the 3DS would hit stores in time for year-end and New Year's - a booming shopping time in Japan because children get cash gifts from relatives during the holidays.

He said Nintendo is likely taking time to perfect the technology, as well as giving more time to outside software developers to come up with games.

"There is an element of awe in 3-D that's really important for games. They are all about entertainment," Hamamura said.

The portable machine looks much like the DS machines now on sale, and has two panels. The top panel shows 3-D imagery, giving players a relatively immediate illusion of virtual reality - such as a puppy licking the screen that appears to live inside the machine.

The 3-D games don't require the special glasses that are needed for 3-D theater movies or 3-D home-console games like rival Sony Corp.'s PlayStation 3. They also don't need 3-D TV sets.

Iwata said the drawback for 3-D technology was that the appeal of the feature can't be conveyed easily in TV or magazine ads.

Fears have also been growing about the health effects of too much 3-D as some people have gotten sick looking at 3-D movies or playing 3-D games.

"We are not taking the success of the 3DS for granted," Iwata told reporters at Makuhari Messe hall in this Tokyo suburb. "The value of the 3-D experience can be understood only by getting people to try it out."

Nintendo said that several 3-D games were in the works including its trademark Super Mario games and "nintendogs + cats."

Outside game developers were also preparing products, such as a 3DS "Biohazard" from Capcom Co.

The 3-D handheld version of "Metal Gear Solid," from Konami Digital Entertainment, shown to reporters on the machine as a demonstration movie, but not in playable game form, presented vivid animation of jungle scenery, buzzing bees and a warrior's hands, all in 3-D, inside the tiny screen.

The 3-D feature is adjustable by a button at the side so players can choose the amount of 3-D razzle-dazzle they want.

Nintendo said that wireless technology packed in the 3DS will allow owners to automatically communicate with passers-by who also have 3DS, allowing them to trade avatar figures and combat each other in fighting games.

Nintendo did not disclose details of the wireless technology, but Iwata said it was beefing up connectivity for 3DS at Japanese fast-food chains, train stations and other spots for social networking as well as gaming.

Nintendo was among the earliest developers of 3-D technology. Its Virtual Boy, which went on sale in the 1990s, bombed, partly because of the bulky headgear required as well as the image being all red.

Iwata acknowledged that failure but said the company had learned from past mistakes.

"Players will be able to move freely around in virtual gaming space with our new 3-D," he said.

#### Future Surgeon Prerequisite: Video Gaming

Video gamers rejoice, your potential future career as a surgeon just got a little less daunting. Forget a morbidly precocious interest in Gray's Anatomy at some tender age, if you play video games, you're already on a trajectory toward a career involving advanced surgical techniques.

Canadian research scientists recently found that hand-eye skills developed by gaming - no /great/ surprise here - train the brain for sophisticated visuomotor tasks, tuning skills necessary for complex surgical procedures involving images displayed on a video screen. Skills such as laparoscopic surgery, for instance.

The study involved 13 males in their twenties who'd played video games a minimum of four hours a week for the prior three years, compared with 13 males who hadn't. Both groups were asked to complete tricky visuomotor tasks, such as using a joystick to accomplish specific goals, or looking one way while reaching in the opposite direction.

"By using high resolution brain imaging, we were able to actually measure which brain areas were activated at a given time during the experiment," said Lauren Sergio, associate professor in the Faculty of Health at York University in Ontario.

"We tested how the skills learned from video game experience can transfer over to new tasks, rather than just looking at brain activity while the subject plays a video game."

Non-gamers tend to use their parietal cortex, which integrates spatial sensory information, according to the study's results, while the group of gamers (or those with more recent gaming experience, anyway) used their prefrontal cortex instead.

What's the difference? The prefrontal cortex "receives highly processed information from all major forebrain systems, and neurophysiological studies suggest that it synthesizes this into representations of learned task contingencies, concepts and task rules," according to a 2002 scientific paper titled "The prefrontal cortex: categories, concepts and cognition."

"In short, the prefrontal cortex seems to underlie our internal representations of the 'rules of the game'. This may provide the necessary foundation for the complex behavior of primates, in whom this structure is most elaborate."

The other spot of good news: The York researchers believe this could be a major breakthrough for Alzheimer's patients, whose visuomotor skills can become severely impaired as the disease progresses.

The study doesn't indicate what type of games lead to prefrontal versus parietal brain area use, but it's something the York research group

hopes to determine in the future, as well as whether gender plays a role.

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A-ONE's Headline News  
The Latest in Computer Technology News  
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

U.S. Cyber Command Slips Behind Schedule

U.S. Cyber Command, responsible for shielding 15,000 U.S. military networks and for being ready to go to war in cyberspace, has slipped behind schedule for becoming fully operational, the Defense Department said on Friday.

The command is still putting necessary capabilities in place, said Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesman. It had been due to be declared fully operational no later than this month, a deadline some had read as October 1.

Cyber Command leads day-to-day protection of all U.S. defense networks and is designed to mount offensive strikes if ordered to do so.

It began operating in May 2010, seven months later than initially ordered by Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

Gates ordered the command's creation in June 2009 to consolidate far-flung units under a four-star general after determining the cyber threat had outgrown the military's existing structures.

More than 100 foreign intelligence organizations are trying to break into U.S. networks, Deputy Defense Secretary William Lynn wrote in the latest issue of Foreign Affairs. Some "already have the capacity to disrupt" U.S. information infrastructure."

Whitman declined to name a new target for reaching full operational capability. The important thing, he said, was building the capabilities, not an "artificial date."

The department blamed the schedule slip chiefly on what Whitman called a seven-month delay in Senate confirmation of Army officer Keith Alexander as head of the new unit located at Fort Meade, Maryland. Alexander was confirmed on May 7.

Alexander, 58, also heads the National Security Agency, the Fort Meade-based Defense Department arm that protects national security information and intercepts foreign communications.

He told the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee last week that putting cyber defenses fully in place was urgent. At the time, he voiced no expectation of a delay in reaching full operating capability.

"The need is great and there is no time to lose," Alexander said in an opening statement to the panel on September 23.

He cited the emergence of new tools that could damage or destroy systems and "have effects approaching those of weapons of mass destruction."

A Senate Armed Services Committee staff member said the delay in Alexander's confirmation followed what he called the Defense Department's "failure to provide information to the committee in a timely fashion."

Committee Chairman Carl Levin said in opening Alexander's April 15 confirmation hearing that the panel had moved "methodically to gain an understanding of what the Congress is being asked to approve and what the key cyberspace issues are that need to be addressed."

The 24th Air Force, a Cyber Command component, was declared fully operational on Friday by General Robert Kehler, commander of Air Force Space Command, the Air Force said.

### U.S. Mounting First Test of Cyber-Blitz Response Plan

The United States is launching its first test of a new plan for responding to an enemy cyber-blitz, including any attack aimed at vital services such as power, water and banks.

Thousands of cyber-security personnel from across the government and industry are to take part in the Department of Homeland Security's Cyber Storm III, a three- to four-day drill starting Tuesday.

The goals are to boost preparedness; examine incident response and enhance information-sharing among federal, state, international and private-sector partners.

"At its core, the exercise is about resiliency - testing the nation's ability to cope with the loss or damage to basic aspects of modern life," said a release made available at DHS's National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center in Arlington.

The simulation tests the newly developed National Cyber Incident Response Plan, a coordinated framework ordered by President Barack Obama.

The plan is designed to be flexible and adaptable enough to mesh responders' efforts across jurisdictional lines. Refinements may be made after the exercise, DHS officials said.

The test involves 11 states, 12 foreign countries 60 private companies.

Six cabinet-level departments are taking part beside Homeland Security: Defense, Commerce, Energy, Justice, Treasury and Transportation, as well as representatives from the intelligence and law-enforcement worlds.

Cyber Storm III takes place amid mounting signs that bits and bytes of malicious computer code could soon be as central to 21st-century conflict as bullets and bombs.

"There is a real probability that in the future, this country will get hit with a destructive attack and we need to be ready for it," U.S. Army General Keith Alexander, the head of a new military cyber-warfare unit, told reporters last week, referring to computer-launched operations.

Cyber Storm III involves simulated harm only, not real impact on any network, said Brett Lambo, the exercise director.

In the drill, mock foes hijack Web security infrastructure used by businesses, government and consumers to verify and authenticate online transactions.

In so doing, they upend Internet reliability and relationships before launching major attacks against the government, certain critical infrastructure, public sector enterprises and international counterparts.

Officials did not spell out the scenario's details to preserve the surprise of exercise play.

Among the industry sectors currently represented at the 24-hour watch and warning hub are information technology, communications, energy and banking and finance, said Sean McGurk, the DHS official who directs the hub inaugurated last October.

Other participants take part from the locations where they would normally respond to a cyber-attack. The foreign "players" are from Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and Switzerland.

#### Lawmakers Decry US Failure To Stop 'Jihadi Websites'

US lawmakers Wednesday lamented their inability to shutter Internet websites set up by violent Islamist groups such as Al-Qaeda that aim to inspire, recruit and train would-be extremists.

"Can we? Yes. Will we? No," Representative Brad Sherman told AFP after a House hearing that sought to pin down a US strategy for the websites, referring to the possibility Congress could clamp down on extremists' online portals.

"It is more likely we will tie ourselves up in knots than we'll do anything useful," added Sherman, chairman of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade, which held the hearing.

He said bureaucratic wrangling and free speech advocates were the main obstacles to giving the US government legal tools to eliminate the sites.

Sherman earlier even lashed out during the hearing at popular video-sharing website YouTube for allowing Yemen-based Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) to post videos with English subtitles that promotes a "jihadist ideology" from its own channel.

"I don't know how much money YouTube makes, how much its executives make, but they are endangering people throughout America for their own profit," he said.

"And it's not about (YouTube's) loyalty to the concept of the First Amendment, it's about their loyalty to money," he complained, referring to the US Constitution which protects freedom of expression.

Sherman also questioned whether US authorities should maintain the groups'



online outlets to gather intelligence or simply eliminate them, asking if the United States is "going to be a polite country or safe country."

He concluded the United States was "manifestly unable to take down these sites through cyber attack because we are restrained by our own politeness."

Gregory McNeal, a law professor at California's Pepperdine University, testified before the hearing that there was "no concerted government effort to shut down jihadist websites" because there was no legal avenue that allows it.

McNeal later told AFP the biggest issue preventing US legislators from going after such sites was "civil liberties opposition groups that would see this as a threat to free speech."

The best way to take them down, McNeal said, was to go through blacklists maintained by the US Treasury and State Department for terrorist organizations, adding the approach would be difficult as authorities would have to verify the websites were maintained by those designated groups.

"The Supreme Court has never spoken on crime-facilitation speech... there's always a challenge between drawing the line between merely informative speech and speech that facilitates a crime with the intent of doing so," he said.

"Is it surmountable? No. Because unless there's a triggering event like an attack that was prompted by a video (on an extremist website), it's easier to keep the status quo. Sadly, we often wait for an attack before we take action."

The rise of extremist groups employing online media to attract followers and give tips on how to pursue jihad against Western targets was highlighted this year with the launch of an English-language Al-Qaeda magazine from AQAP - removing the language barrier for non-Arabic speakers to the group's ideology.

The first edition of "Inspire" magazine in June ran articles such as one entitled "Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom" and featured sleek pictures of Al-Qaeda leaders accompanied by sleek graphics.

Pete Hoekstra, the top Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, said upon the magazine's launch that AQAP's effort was "unfortunately well done," and proof "Al-Qaeda and its affiliates have launched a direct appeal for Americans to launch small-scale attacks here at home."

#### US Seeks To Ease Internet Wiretaps

The Obama administration is drawing up legislation to make it easier for US intelligence services to eavesdrop on the Internet, including email exchanges and social networks, The New York Times said Monday.

The White House intends to submit a bill before Congress next year that would require all online services that enable communications to be technically capable of complying with a wiretap order, including being able to intercept and unscramble encrypted messages, the Times reported.

The services would include encrypted email transmitters like BlackBerry, social networking websites like Facebook and peer-to-peer messaging software like Skype.

Federal law enforcement and national security officials are seeking the new regulations, arguing that extremists and criminals are increasingly communicating online rather than using phones.

"We're talking about lawfully authorized intercepts," said Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) general counsel Valerie Caproni.

"We're not talking expanding authority. We're talking about preserving our ability to execute our existing authority in order to protect the public safety and national security."

Officials from the White House, Justice Department, National Security Agency, FBI and other agencies have been meeting in recent months to craft the proposals, the Times said.

But, citing officials familiar with the discussions, it said the participants had not yet agreed on important elements, such as how to define which entities are considered communications service providers.

President Barack Obama's administration is seeking a broad mandate that would also apply to companies whose servers are operated abroad, such as Research in Motion, the Canadian maker of BlackBerry smartphones.

As an example, officials told the Times that investigators discovered that Faisal Shahzad, the suspect from the failed Times Square bombing in May, had been using a communication service without prebuilt interception capacity.

That meant that there would have been a delay before he could have been wiretapped, had he aroused suspicion beforehand, the officials said.

#### Leaked Bill Aims to Create Net Neutrality Law

Draft legislation from the U.S. Congress would create a new network neutrality law but would prohibit the U.S. Federal Communications Commission from making its own rules prohibiting broadband providers from selectively slowing Web traffic.

The draft bill, published on NationalJournal.com, would hold mobile broadband providers to a less stringent net neutrality standard than wired carriers.

The bill, authored by Democrats including House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Henry Waxman, would prohibit wired broadband providers from "unjustly or unreasonably" discriminating against legal Web traffic, but would not apply that prohibition to mobile providers. The bill would prohibit both wired and mobile providers from blocking consumer access to websites and from blocking legal websites.

Mobile carriers have argued that net neutrality rules shouldn't apply to them because of the limited bandwidth on their networks.

The legislative proposal is similar in some ways to a net neutrality plan

released in August by Google and Verizon Communications. Like the Google and Verizon plan, the Waxman draft would allow the FCC to fine broadband providers up to US\$2 million for violating net neutrality rules, but the Waxman proposal would not take away the rulemaking authority of the FCC.

The Google and Verizon plan, criticized by many net neutrality advocates, would require the FCC to enforce net neutrality principles on a case-by-case basis.

The new draft won praise from some groups that have opposed the FCC's efforts this year to create formal net neutrality rules. Waxman's bill would prohibit the FCC from reclassifying broadband as a common-carrier service subject to increased regulation by the agency.

FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski has proposed reclassifying broadband from being a largely unregulated service. That move came after a U.S. appeals court ruled earlier this year that the agency did not have the authority to enforce informal net neutrality principles after Comcast slowed its customers' access to the BitTorrent peer-to-peer service.

An FCC spokeswoman declined to comment on the draft bill, as did a spokesman for Public Knowledge, a digital rights group pushing for stronger net neutrality rules.

Scott Cleland, chairman of the broadband carrier-backed NetCompetition.org, praised the House draft.

"This House Democrat draft signals to the FCC Democrat majority loud and clear that House Democrats do not support the radical ... proposal to regulate broadband Internet networks as 1934 common carrier telephone networks," he said in an e-mail. "This legislation proposes a sensible resolution and workable alternative to this destructive polarizing issue that is serving no one who seeks an open Internet that works, grows and innovates without anti-competitive concerns."

The draft includes some "positive elements," but also raises some concerns, added Randolph May, president of the free-market think tank, the Free State Foundation.

The bill's December 2012 expiration date would allow Congress to focus on broader telecom law reform, May said. But he questioned the bill's prohibition on content discrimination.

"If interpreted too rigidly by the FCC, this legacy common carrier-type restriction can inhibit development of new, differentiated services in response to evolving consumer demand," he said. "I think any discrimination prohibition should explicitly require a showing of consumer harm as a prerequisite to any agency remedial action."

#### House Democrats Shelve Net Neutrality Proposal

House Democrats have shelved a last-ditch effort to broker a compromise on the thorny issue of "network neutrality."

The Democrats late Wednesday abandoned proposed rules meant to prevent phone and cable companies from playing favorites with the online traffic flowing over their networks.

House Commerce Committee Chairman Henry Waxman, R-Calif., had led the effort. He gave up in the face of Republican opposition to his plan.

Waxman's retreat is a setback for the nation's big phone and cable companies. They fear the issue could now go back to the Federal Communications Commission, which could impose more restrictive rules on the industry. The FCC has also deadlocked over the net neutrality issue.

"If Congress can't act, the FCC must," Waxman said in a statement.

#### Worm Hits Computers of Staff at Iran Nuclear Plant

A complex computer worm capable of seizing control of industrial plants has affected the personal computers of staff working at Iran's first nuclear power station weeks before the facility is to go online, the official news agency reported Sunday.

The project manager at the Bushehr nuclear plant, Mahmoud Jafari, said a team is trying to remove the malware from several affected computers, though it "has not caused any damage to major systems of the plant," the IRNA news agency reported.

It was the first sign that the malicious computer code, dubbed Stuxnet, which has spread to many industries in Iran, has also affected equipment linked to the country's nuclear program, which is at the core of the dispute between Tehran and Western powers like the United States.

Experts in Germany discovered the worm in July, and it has since shown up in a number of attacks - primarily in Iran, Indonesia, India and the U.S.

The malware is capable of taking over systems that control the inner workings of industrial plants.

In a sign of the high-level concern in Iran, experts from the country's nuclear agency met last week to discuss ways of fighting the worm.

The infection of several computers belonging to workers at Bushehr will not affect plans to bring the plant online in October, Jafari was quoted as saying.

The Russian-built plant will be internationally supervised, but world powers are concerned that Iran wants to use other aspects of its civil nuclear power program as a cover for making weapons. Of highest concern to world powers is Iran's main uranium enrichment facility in the city of Natanz.

Iran, which denies having any nuclear weapons ambitions, says it only wants to enrich uranium to the lower levels needed for producing fuel for power plants. At higher levels of processing, the material can also be used in nuclear warheads.

The destructive Stuxnet worm has surprised experts because it is the first one specifically created to take over industrial control systems, rather than just steal or manipulate data.

The United States is also tracking the worm, and the Department of Homeland Security is building specialized teams that can respond quickly to cyber emergencies at industrial facilities across the country.

On Saturday, Iran's semi-official ISNA news agency reported that the malware had spread throughout Iran, but did not name specific sites affected.

#### RIM Unveils PlayBook Tablet to Compete with iPad

Research In Motion unveiled a tablet computer on Monday that it hopes will leapfrog Apple's iPad with its potential for social networking, media publishing and corporate uses.

The tablet, named BlackBerry PlayBook, has a seven-inch screen and dual facing cameras. It has WiFi and Bluetooth but needs to link with a BlackBerry smartphone to access the cellular network.

Shares of RIM jumped nearly 2 percent to \$49.29 in after-hours trade following the announcement, made at the company's annual developers' conference in San Francisco.

"It's ultra-mobile and it's ultra-thin," co-Chief Executive Mike Lazaridis told the developers, who responded with intermittent applause. "PlayBook delivers a no-compromises web experience," he said.

PlayBook can mirror a BlackBerry phone, giving users a bigger screen to view media and edit documents, and wipes all corporate data once the link between the two devices is broken.

The PlayBook weighs 400 grams (14 ounces). It will launch with a dual-core, one gigahertz processor running a QNX kernel and operating system that can incorporate BlackBerry OS 6, which RIM introduced in its Torch smartphone in August.

The market for tablets - touchscreen devices larger than a smartphone and smaller than a laptop - has gotten more congested since Apple launched its iPad in April, with Samsung and Dell showing off releases in the past two months and others expected from Hewlett-Packard and Toshiba.

While the market's direction is relatively uncharted, most analysts agree success will be measured by which applications each tablet can run.

"RIM has a strong story to tell to developers to say - look, however you want to make things for this thing, we're giving you tools and a platform that will allow you to do that," said Forrester Research principal analyst Charles Golvin.

The QNX operating system uses industry standard APIs, or application programming interfaces, meaning developers should have little difficulty in making their games, software and other applications work on the device.

"All the code that is out there, and there is a huge source base out there, (it) is completely portable to QNX," said Dan Dodge, who co-founded and led the company until RIM acquired QNX less than a year ago.

RIM expects to ship the device to corporate customers and developers in

October. It will become commercially available early in 2011.

RIM has yet to set an exact price but says it will fall in the lower range of prices for consumer tablets already in the suddenly congested market.

Asked if later versions will connect to advanced 4G networks now under development, RIM co-Chief Executive Jim Balsillie told Reuters: "That's not a question we're answering today, but it's not a hard one to guess at."

The absence of a direct link to the cellular network means network carriers may be less eager to subsidize the device or promote it heavily. But corporate IT departments will likely cheer about its ability to mirror a company-issued BlackBerry without retaining that data when that link is broken.

"It's compelling, certainly to an IT guy, if they can look at this tablet and say it's really nothing we have to lock down," said Kevin Burden from ABI Research. "An IT manager can look at this tablet and say we don't even need to put this on our asset-tracking list."

#### Acer Tries Another 3D Laptop With Aspire AS5745DG

Acer will make 3D part of its holiday laptop lineup with the Acer Aspire 5745DG, but don't accuse the computer maker of joining the bandwagon.

Acer was already pushing 3D notebooks last year, before any television makers introduced 3D sets stateside and began hyping them as the next big thing in home entertainment. Last year's model, the Acer Aspire 5738DG, was praised in PCWorld's review for converting 2D movies effectively and excelling at 3D games, but faltered on weak battery life and a cheap-feeling touchpad.

The new Acer Aspire 5745DG takes a different approach to 3D compared to its predecessor. Instead of using polarized glasses (the cheaper kind you get in movie theaters), this laptop goes full-bore with active shutter glasses, like the ones used with today's 3D televisions, and a built-in IR receiver. Acer says each eye sees a 60 Hz signal as the glasses alternate images between the left and right eyes, creating the 3D effect.

For content, the Aspire 5745DG's main draw will be 3D gaming, using Nvidia's 3D Vision technology (here's a list of supported games, sorted by how well they perform in 3D). But Acer's notebook also packs a 3D Blu-ray player and includes a feature that converts 2D images to 3D.

As for other specs, Acer's Aspire 5745DG runs on an Intel Core i5 processor with NVIDIA GeForce GT 420M graphics and a 500 GB hard drive, but no word on RAM. The laptop also includes a webcam and 802.11 a/b/g/n Wi-Fi.

Can the 5745DG overcome the battery problems of last year's model? Hard to say, because Acer avoided giving an estimate on battery life in its product announcement. However, the new notebook has a 9-cell battery. Hopefully, that'll outlast the 6-cell battery in the 5738DG, which cranked for a measly 2 hours and 28 minutes in /PCWorld's/ tests.

Acer isn't the only company working on a 3D laptop with active-shutter

glasses. HP's Envy 17 is coming this holiday season. Toshiba and Sony have also announced 3D laptop plans. Acer's Aspire 5745DG will arrive in late October for a cool \$1000.

### Microsoft Beefs Up Hotmail Security

Microsoft is beefing up security for Hotmail in order to curtail hijacking and phishing scams on legitimate accounts.

"These updates will help you protect your password and, in the unlikely event that a hijacker gains access to your account, provide a more secure recovery path so you will always be able to get your account back and kick the hijackers out," John Scarrow, Microsoft's general manager of safety services, wrote in a blog post.

In addition to pre-existing security measures, Hotmail is adding a couple of password proofs to keep accounts from being infiltrated. Scarrow compared proofs to a set of spare keys when you've been locked out of your house.

Previously, users locked out of their accounts were asked to provide an alternate e-mail address or answer a personal question to prove their identities. However, "only 25 percent of people with a secret question actually remembered their answer when needed," Scarrow wrote.

As a result, Microsoft introduced two new Hotmail account recovery options: cell phone verification and a link to a "trusted PC." With the phone option, Microsoft will send a single-use password via text message that you can use to activate your account. With "trusted PC," meanwhile, you can link your account to two or more personal computers.

"Then, if you ever need to regain control of your account by resetting your password, you simply need to be using your computer and we will know you are the legitimate owner," Scarrow wrote.

As an added layer of security, making changes to your Hotmail account - like adding your cell phone number or a trusted PC - would require you to access an existing proof, like that second e-mail address. "This means that even if a hijacker steals your password, they can't lock you out of your account or create backdoors for themselves," Scarrow said.

Microsoft also pledged to monitor the reputations of IP addresses in order to more readily pick up on potential threats.

Microsoft rolled out an updated version of Hotmail for its 360 million users this year, finishing up earlier this month. It also incorporated Facebook chat and a partnership with professional networking site LinkedIn, and allowed for users to post updates simultaneously to all their connected networks. It also added Microsoft Exchange ActiveSync for e-mail, contacts, and calendar to the iPhone.

### Google Gives Gmail Users More Control Over Inboxes

Google Inc. is addressing one of the biggest complaints about its free e-mail service by giving people more control over how their inboxes are organized.

The new option announced Wednesday will allow Gmail users to choose whether they prefer their incoming messages stacked in chronological order, instead of having them threaded together as part of the same electronic conversation.

Gmail has been automatically grouping messages by topic or senders since Google rolled out the service six years ago.

But this so-called "conversation view" confused or frustrated many Gmail users who had grown accustomed to seeing all their newest messages at the top of the inbox followed by the older correspondence. After all, that's how most other e-mail programs work.

The complaints grew loud enough to persuade Google to revise the Gmail settings so users can turn off conversation view and unravel their messages.

"We really hoped everyone would learn to love conversation view, but we came to realize that it's just not right for some people," Google software engineer Doug Chen wrote in a Wednesday blog post.

The aversion to conversation view doesn't seem to be widespread. Gmail ended July with nearly 186 million worldwide users, a 22 percent increase from the same time a year ago, according to the research firm comScore Inc. Both Microsoft's Windows Live Hotmail (nearly 346 million users) and Yahoo's e-mail (303 million users) are larger, but aren't growing nearly as rapidly as Gmail.

### Google Opens Goo.gl URL Shortening Service to the Public

Before Twitter blew up and everyone started thinking in 140 characters, no one really cared about having long URLs. With Twitter users scrambling to solve the 140-character puzzle, URL shortening sites like Bit.ly, TinyURL, and Ow.ly have grown increasingly popular. Google on Thursday jumped into the game and announced its own URL shortening site, Goo.gl.

The Google URL shortener was actually introduced last December as part of Google Toolbar and Feedburner. Since then, the service has been integrated into Google News, Blogger, Google Maps, Picasa Web Albums, and Google Moderator. But until now, there was no standalone Google site to shorten a URL.

But why bother with Goo.gl when there are already other sites you can use? According to Google's Social Web Blog, "when you click a goo.gl shortened URL, you're protected against malware, phishing and spam using the same industry-leading technology we use in search and other products."

Like many of the URL shortening sites, goo.gl is pretty basic. However, it does have some nice URL-tracking features. For example, when you sign into your Google account, you can see a list of URLs that you've shortened. You can then view public, real-time analytics data, including traffic over time, top referrers, traffic sources, and visitor profiles for countries,



browsers, and platforms. Also, according to Mashable, there's a hidden Easter egg in Goo.gl.

"Earlier today, Google engineer Matt Cutts tweeted ... add .qr to a shortened goo.gl URL and you'll create a QR code that, when scanned, will redirect to the original URL. It's a quirky additive that makes goo.gl all the more friendly for brands and marketers experimenting with QR codes. A Twitter tipster also informed us that you can add .info to the goo.gl URL to check out analytics," Mashable said.

#### Microsoft Marks Anti-Malware Anniversary with Stats

To mark the first anniversary of Microsoft Security Essentials, the company has released some sobering statistics it has gathered during the past year via the free anti-malware software.

According to Microsoft, Security Essentials has been installed on 31 million computers worldwide. Out of that group, 27 million users reported malware infections during the year.

The United States was the most frequently attacked country. Microsoft said that during the past year, more than 2 million U.S. machines were attacked and reported the infections to the Microsoft Malware Protection Center. The U.S. was followed by China, which had over 693,000 attacks reported to the center. Brazil and the United Kingdom took the third and fourth spots with over 586,000 attacks hitting Brazil and more than 212,000 attacks reported by U.K. users.

It's worth noting that those figures are only threats reported to Microsoft. They do not represent all the attacks that occurred in the Windows ecosystem throughout the year.

Overall, Microsoft Security Essentials detected nearly 400 million threats during the past year, Microsoft said. Security Essentials users opted to remove 366 million of those threats.

Although those figures might highlight the issues Windows users continue to have staying safe from malware infections, Microsoft was quick to point out that it believes the past year has been a success for Security Essentials. In fact, Microsoft said in a blog post that the company is doing its part to "increase security across the Windows ecosystem."

Security Essentials has enjoyed some acclaim since its release last year. CNET's review described the software as one of the "good set-it-and-forget-it security programs" and gave it four and a half out of five stars.

#### OpenOffice.org Volunteers Cut Ties with Oracle

LibreOffice. That's the possible new name of OpenOffice.org. The volunteers that develop and promote the free office software severed ties with Oracle on Tuesday and formed an independent group called The Document Foundation.

OpenOffice.org successfully grew under the Sun Microsystems banner for a

decade, but the volunteers believe a new ecosystem will generate more competition and choice for customers, as well as drive innovation in office-productivity software. The group also hopes to lower the barrier of adoption for users and developers. In essence, the group wasn't happy under Oracle.

Oracle acquired the OpenOffice.org assets along with its acquisition of Sun. The Document Foundation has invited Oracle to become a member of the new foundation, and has asked the tech giant to donate the brand name. Until Oracle responds, the group is using the name LibreOffice. The break has been widely lauded by software companies large and small.

Chris DiBona, open-source programs manager at Google, called The Document Foundation a great step forward in encouraging further development of open-source office suites. "Having a level playing field for all contributors is fundamental in creating a broad and active community around an open-source software project," DiBona said.

Red Hat's Jan Wildeboer and Canonical's Mark Shuttleworthy, among many others, also offered support for the project. And Guy Lunardi, product management director at Novell, made a bold statement: "Viva la LibreOffice. Ultimately, we envision LibreOffice will do for the office-productivity market what Mozilla Firefox has done for browsers."

The Document Foundation vowed to build on the work of OpenOffice.org. The founders noted that the group was created in the belief that an independent foundation is the best fit to the community's core values of openness, transparency and valuing people for their contributions.

Oracle has released two stable versions of the open-source software since the Sun merger, but the OpenOffice.org community didn't jibe with Oracle's vision. Oracle couldn't immediately be reached for comment. But Al Hilwa, an analyst at IDC, isn't surprised that the community is breaking away from Oracle.

"Is Oracle going to run things more tightly than Sun? No doubt. It's a tighter ship. They are going to make some decisions about what to support and what not to support, who to invest in and who not to," Hilwa said. "I wouldn't expect any less from them."

The question is, could Oracle's decision to run a tighter ship ultimately become a problem with its open-source connections? There is already tension between Oracle and open-source communities. Hilwa said it could cause some issues for developers.

"Oracle's DNA is to make decisions around cost and investments and tight control," Hilwa said. "It's not like Oracle to scatter investments and resources all over the place without any specific quid pro quo."

#### Users Making the Switch to Cutting Edge Browsers

New Web browser market share stats are out. This past month has seen a decline in the overall market share of the Internet Explorer franchise, but breaking things down by version shows that more users are adopting the latest generation of Web browsers whether it's Internet Explorer, Firefox, or Chrome.

Microsoft's Internet Explorer declined again in overall market share for the first time in a few months. The browser as a whole lost .75 percent - with Internet Explorer 6 dropping .63 percent, and Internet Explorer 7 falling half a percent. Those losses were offset, though, by yet another significant gain for Internet Explorer 8 - climbing 1.16 percent since the last month.

Chrome 6 had by far the largest gain over the previous month, coupled with Chrome 5 taking the most precipitous plunge. Overall, Chrome is upslightly, but that is after a decline of 4.33 percent by Chrome 5 and a swift rise of 4.66 percent over the previous month for Chrome 6. Apparently the vast majority of Chrome users willingly embraced the latest browser and made the switch.

Firefox users followed the same trajectory. The use of Firefox 3.5 fell .18 percent. However, the latest official release, Firefox 3.6, went up .25 percent, and Firefox 4 - which is still only in beta - went up .08 percent.

Even Internet Explorer 9 is riding the cutting edge browser popularity wave. It has only been two weeks since Microsoft publicly launched the beta of Internet Explorer 9 at a media event in San Francisco. In that brief period, though, the beta of Microsoft's next major update to the Internet Explorer Web browser has already been downloaded more than six million times.

In an Exploring IE blog post, Microsoft's Ryan Gavin notes, "Net Applications' browser usage share report released today shows IE9 Beta usage share at 0.25 percent for the two weeks after launch. The tech enthusiast community is observing a notable increase in IE9 activity: LiveSide reported IE9 Beta users accounted for 25 percent of their reader base, IE9 overtook IE6 users at DownloadSquad, and Network World reported poll results showing 47 percent of people intend to try IE9 Beta. Additionally, we saw tweets from the likes of Ed Bott who noticed, "Halfway through Day 1 of IE9 availability, 8 percent of my ZDNet visitors are using the beta. Steady increase all day, higher than IE7.""

Some of that upswing may be a function of the success of Windows 7 and an increase in PC sales. Users who have clung to outdated browsers like IE6 would suddenly have IE8 by default on a new Windows 7 system, and in the event that a user chooses not to use Internet Explorer, the likelihood is that they will install the latest version of whatever browser it is they opt to install.

Regardless, of the reasons behind the numbers, new Web technologies need new Web browsers, so the transition to cutting edge Web browsers benefits developers, as well as everyone else who surfs the Web.

### U.S. Busts \$3M 'Zeus Trojan' Cyber Crime Ring

The Manhattan U.S. Attorney on Thursday announced charges against 37 individuals for their roles in cyber attacks that logged keystrokes to help the criminal steal \$3 million from dozens of U.S. bank accounts.

The cyber-attacks, using malware known as the "Zeus Trojan," started in Eastern Europe. E-mails were sent to computers and U.S. small businesses and municipalities, and if opened, the malware embedded itself in the

victims' computers and recorded their keystrokes. Those keystrokes were used to capture bank account numbers, passwords, and other online security codes.

Hackers then used the personal information to take over peoples' bank accounts and transfer money to accounts set up by their co-conspirators. These accounts were set up by a "money mule organization," which recruited people in the U.S. on student visas to set up bank accounts using fake passports. Once the accounts were set up, and the money was transferred in from the victims' accounts, the mules forwarded the cash to the scammers' bank accounts - many of them overseas.

All told, the scammers made off with \$3 million.

N.Y. Attorney General Preet Bharara said 37 defendants have been charged in 21 separate cases. Ten people were arrested early Thursday, while an additional 10 were previously arrested. Seventeen people are still being sought in the U.S. and abroad. The defendants charged in Manhattan federal court include managers of and recruiters for the money mule organization, an individual who obtained the false foreign passports for the mules, and money mules.

"The digital age brings with it many benefits, but also many challenges for law enforcement and our financial institutions. As today's arrests show, the modern, high-tech bank heist does not require a gun, a mask, a note, or a getaway car. It requires only the Internet and ingenuity," Bharara said in a statement. "And it can be accomplished in the blink of an eye, with just a click of the mouse. But today's coordinated operation demonstrates that these 21 Century bank robbers are not completely anonymous; they are not invulnerable. Working with our colleagues here and abroad, we will continue to attack this threat, and bring cyber criminals to justice."

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